

Introduction of Youth Empowerment Seminar (YES) for Schools

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Abstract

Young people face emotional issues such as low self-esteem, depression and anxiety that are a source of great stress. Researches (Grossman, et al., 2004; Deckro, et al., 2010) showed that mind-body practices such as stretch, breathing exercise, and meditation, are many of the effective tools to reduce stress and maintain the physical and mental wellbeing. Yes-for-school Intro is a mindful wellbeing, life skill training program, integrates into schools to support the students acquire healthy and effective way to manage stress. Yes-for-school intro received the grant from Office of Engagement at Purdue to conduct sessions at two PE classes of Central Catholic Jr-Sr (CC) in 2014-2015. Ten Purdue students from Yesplus at Purdue student organization executed it and 118 students from CC attended with two PE teachers' support.

This outreach allowed Purdue students to support local school youth to practice the wisdom of being willingness to be available for others, and to build a bigger sense of belongingness with our Greater Lafayette community. The result of this program shows that 93% of total students reported after session, they "feel calm" in at 25 % better. They also shared these changes, "My mood is better" (74%), "My stress is less" (70%), "My focus and concentration is better" (65%), My anger and frustration is less (55%), and My sleep is better (46%). In conclusion, this program has shown the positive impact in helping participant students in managing their emotions and mind toward calmer, focused, in-control and healthy way.

Description of the Project

Yesplus at Purdue student organization is aimed to create a stress-free and violence-free campus through practices of ancient wisdom, services, and physiological tools such as breathing, and stretch exercise. Researches (Deckro, et al., 2002; Grossman, et al., 2004) showed that mind-body practices such as stretch, breathing exercise, and meditation, are many of the effective tools to reduce stress and maintain the physical and mental wellbeing.

Mr. Adam Vanderwielen, is the PE teacher of our community organization partner, Central Catholic High school. He experienced the benefits of those exercises to reduce stress, improve the level of happiness, connectedness, and productivity. He wishes to integrate those activities into his PE class to better support his students manage social and emotional challenges. Mr. Vanderwielen got in touch with Art of Living Purdue. We discussed to organize Youth Empowerment Seminar for Schools (YES for Schools),¹ a program integrated those mind-body techniques, conducted over 36 schools across the US by the International Association for Human Values (IAHV) ².

The implementation of YES can help high school students acquire those mindful, healthy, yet effective techniques and knowledge to reduce stress, improve productivity, maintain the interpersonal harmony at school and home. This outreach to Central Catholic will allow our Purdue students mentor local high school youth to manage stress, to practice the wisdom of services, and to build a bigger sense of belongingness with our Greater Lafayette community.

Role and how many people benefited from project, learning activities in project, and the major objectives completed by the project.

There were 10 student volunteers from Yesplus at Purdue club (previously known as Art of Living) and 5 community volunteers involved in this project. The original plan was to offer this Yes for School introductory program for students at PE classes taught by Mr. Adam Vanderwielen, the PE teacher at Central Catholic High School. We directly taught 48 Adam's PE students for 8 sessions in 2014 (total 300 minutes, 5 hours) and 6 sessions (total 300 minutes, 5 hours) in 2015. In the first month of this program, Adam also invited his colleague-Mary Ellen's 70 PE students (45 students from junior high and 25 students from 1st year in high school) to join this project. So we ended up teaching 118 (48+70=118) students.

This project- YES for Schools Intro is aimed to provide students' tangible tools and knowledge to sustain and enhance the healthy emotion & mind. Please see the objectives below.

Healthy Mind via stretches, breathing techniques and resting relaxation, team games, and knowledge discussion.

- a. Self access the benefits of relaxation exercises (stretches, games, discussion, breathing & resting) that encourage a calm state of mind
- b. Self access the benefits of relaxation exercises (stretches, games, discussion, breathing & resting) that reduce stress & anger
- c. Self access the benefits of relaxation exercises (stretches, games, discussion, breathing & resting) that improve focus & concentration

We designed a survey to understand students' learning results. 48 students (Adam's

¹ Youth Empowerment Seminar for Schools

<http://www.youthempowermentseminar.org>

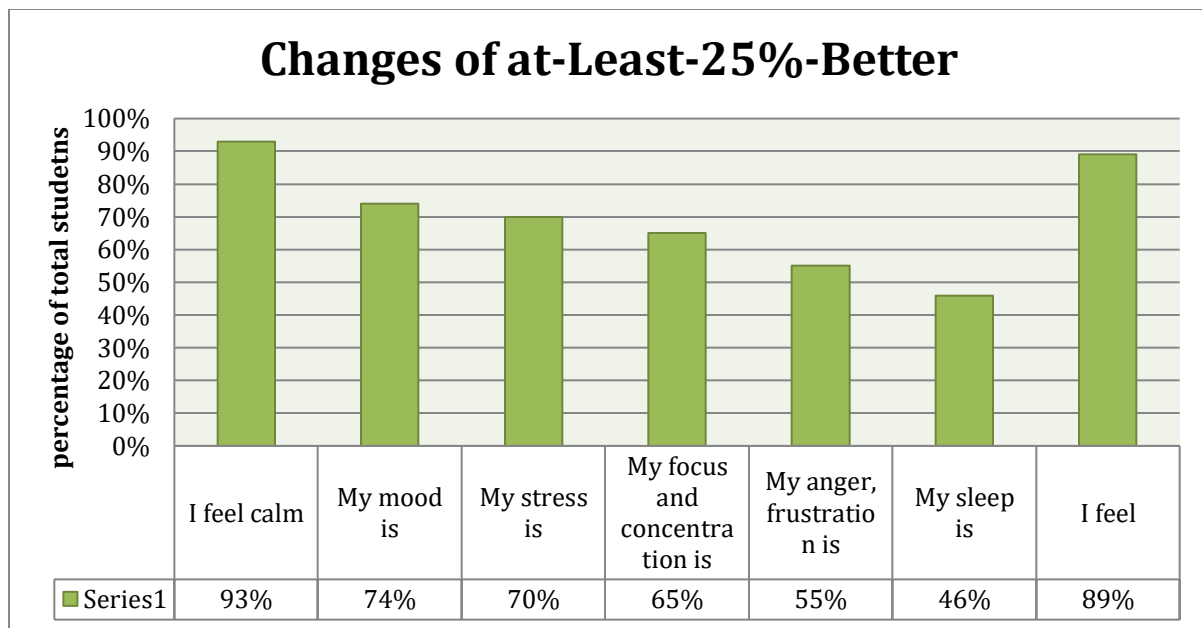
² International Association for Human Values, (IAHV)

<http://www.youthempowermentseminar.org/our-impact/our-schools/>

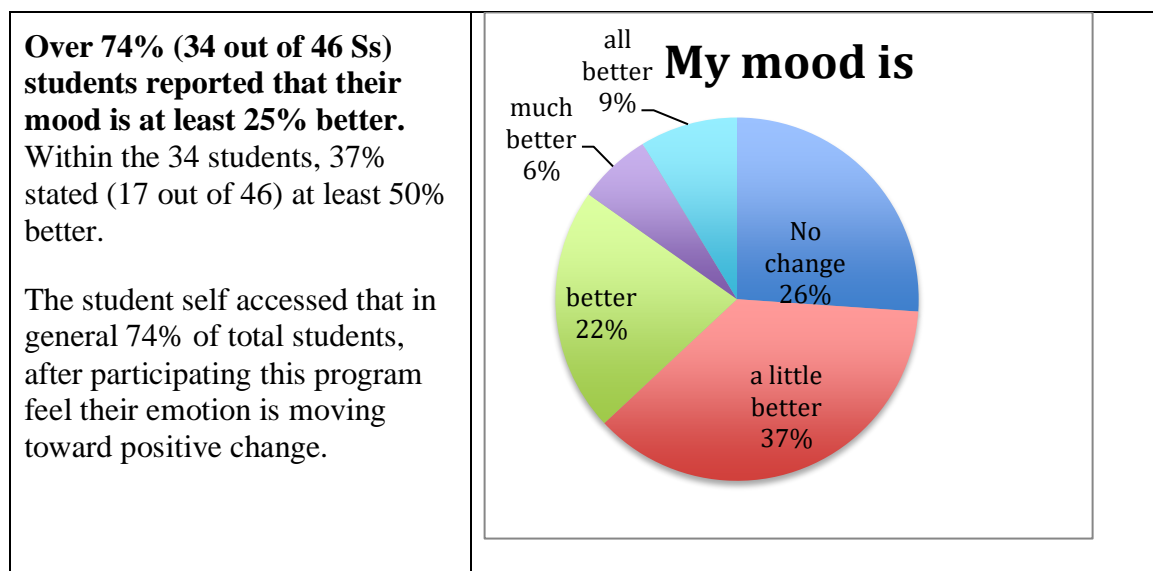
classes. There are 18 boys & 28 girls. The average age is 14.9 years old.) joined this survey after 12 sessions (10 hours, from Oct 2nd, 2014 to April 21, 2015). 46 students completely/accurately filled up this survey.

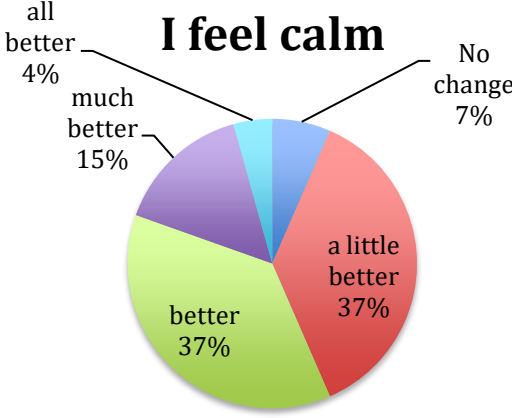
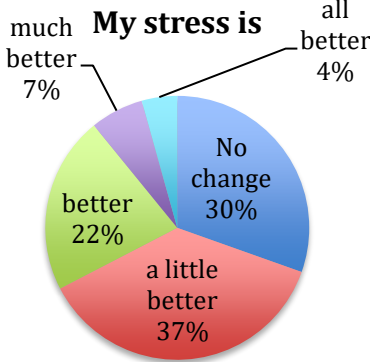
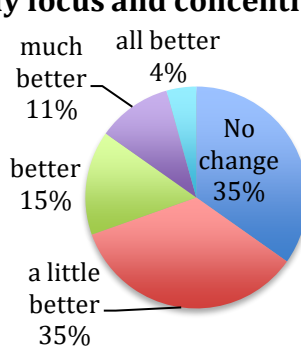
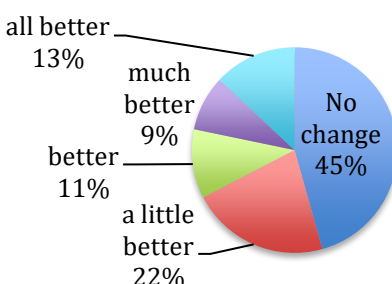
Their self-report learning result shows that calmness is the most obvious difference they found out. **93% of total students reported feel at least 25% better in “I feel calm”**. Then the order of other changes (show at least 25% better) are I feel/ over all feelings (89%), My mood (74%), My stress (70%), My focus and concentration (65%), My anger and frustration (55%), and My sleep (46%).


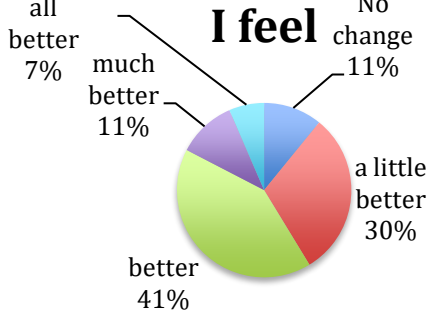
In conclusion, this program has shown the positive impact in helping participant students in managing their emotions and mind toward calmer, focused, in-control and healthy way.



Please see the detailed result of each item below.



<p>In the item of “I feel calm”, 93% of total students reported feel at least 25% better. It suggested that 43 out of 46 students feel calmer after this program.</p>	<div><p>I feel calm</p><table><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>a little better</td><td>37%</td></tr><tr><td>better</td><td>37%</td></tr><tr><td>much better</td><td>15%</td></tr><tr><td>all better</td><td>4%</td></tr><tr><td>No change</td><td>7%</td></tr></table></div>	Response	Percentage	a little better	37%	better	37%	much better	15%	all better	4%	No change	7%
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<p>In “My Stress is”, 32 of 46 (70%) students self-reported that their stress (stress-management) is at least 25% better.</p>	<div><p>My stress is</p><table><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>a little better</td><td>37%</td></tr><tr><td>better</td><td>22%</td></tr><tr><td>much better</td><td>7%</td></tr><tr><td>all better</td><td>4%</td></tr><tr><td>No change</td><td>30%</td></tr></table></div>	Response	Percentage	a little better	37%	better	22%	much better	7%	all better	4%	No change	30%
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<p>For the improvement of “My focus and concentration”, there are 65% of total students (30 out of 46) stated that their focus and concentration is moving toward at least 25% better.</p>	<div><p>My focus and concentration is</p><table><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>a little better</td><td>35%</td></tr><tr><td>better</td><td>15%</td></tr><tr><td>much better</td><td>11%</td></tr><tr><td>all better</td><td>4%</td></tr><tr><td>No change</td><td>35%</td></tr></table></div>	Response	Percentage	a little better	35%	better	15%	much better	11%	all better	4%	No change	35%
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<p>In the “ My anger and frustration”, it suggested that 55% students (25 out of 46), stated that their anger and frustration is at least 25% better (a little better).</p>	<div><p>My anger, frustration is</p><table><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr><tr><td>No change</td><td>45%</td></tr><tr><td>a little better</td><td>22%</td></tr><tr><td>better</td><td>11%</td></tr><tr><td>much better</td><td>9%</td></tr><tr><td>all better</td><td>13%</td></tr></table></div>	Response	Percentage	No change	45%	a little better	22%	better	11%	much better	9%	all better	13%
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<p>In their change of sleep, 21 out of 46 students (46%) reported that their sleep moves toward at least 25% better direction.</p>	<p>My sleep</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>No change</td> <td>54%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>a little better</td> <td>22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>better</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>all better</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>much better</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	No change	54%	a little better	22%	better	15%	all better	9%	much better	0%
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<p>For the overall emotion, 89% students (41 out of 46) feel at least 25% better than before. 27 students (59%) feel at least 50% overall better.</p>	<p>I feel</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>better</td> <td>41%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>a little better</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>much better</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No change</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>all better</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	better	41%	a little better	30%	much better	11%	No change	11%	all better	7%
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Suggestions for improving a similar project in the future, please describe

According to students' survey and volunteers' feedback, we generated few suggestions below.

From the students' perspective, 14 out of 46 students suggested to have more yoga stretches, poses and sequences. 11 out of 46 students suggested having more games; on the contrary, there were 5 out of 46 students suggested to have less games and more varieties of exercises. In conclusion, the students suggested having more varieties of the activities, particularly of the yoga and games. The instructors need to balance the timing between games and other activities such as yoga, discussion, and resting.

From the volunteers' feedback, we reflected and reached three points below.

- 1) Recruit more college students to join this community services. Originally, we planned to have 20 students to volunteer, however many students' schedule cannot match. In the end, we had 10 students and 5 community volunteers join the service. Next time, we need to contact more students in the very beginning and then we can make sure have a larger pool of volunteers.
- 2) Improve the approaches to invite volunteer students: give volunteer students extra-curricular service credits; connect with other student organizations that share the similar interests to join this program.
- 3) Have more formal training sessions for volunteer students. This can help them know more precisely how to say, what to lead, and what to reflect and learn from the volunteering services.

Reference:

Deckro, G. R., Ballinger, K. M., Hoyt, M., Wilcher, M., Dusek, J., Myers, P., ... & Benson, H. (2002). The evaluation of a mind/body intervention to reduce psychological distress and perceived stress in college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 50(6), 281-287.

Grossman, P., Niemann, L., Schmidt, S., & Walach, H. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Journal of psychosomatic research*, 57(1), 35-43.

Appendix: Survey questions

Yes for School Intro provided by Yesplus at Purdue Student Organizaton (Oct 2014-April 2015)

Age: _____ Gender: _____ School: _____

Please circle the activities that you like

Yoga/Stretch, Victory (hello breath), Power Breath,
Lying-Down Rest, Games, Be-Button-Proof Discussion

Please check one box on each row to show how you feel

Check one box on each row to show how you feel.	No change	A little better 25%	Better 50%	Much better 75%	All better
I feel calm...					
My mood is...					
My stress is...					
My focus and concentration is...					
My sleep is...					
My anger, frustration is...					
I feel....					

How do you think this program could be improved?

Please give feedback for your teacher? _____

Would you recommend this program to a friend? ☐ Yes, ☐ Not sure, ☐ I don't know, ☐ No